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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MARCH 23, 2006

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 23, 2006. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

ZAMAN / OZGUR GUNDEM: Concerning the issue of foreign nationals attending the Newruz celebrations, Spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, "Should an unlawful conduct took place, it is natural and for certain that required measures against misconduct will be taken...I do not know the circumstances that surround these foreign nationals' visit to Turkey. These will be examined and assessed by our authorities."

HURRIYET / ZAMAN: Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, allowed a Newruz reception to be held at the municipality building where people participating in the reception wore badges of Abdullah Ocalan. In his speech Livingstone said that Kurds had been suffering oppression for ages. Livingstone used the word "Kurdistan" in his speech. In his remarks made to the Cihan News Agency, Livingstone further stressed that they should extend a helping hand concerning human rights issues to the Kurdish minority in Turkey.

OZGUR GUNDEM: DTP Co-Chairpersons held a press conference following the Newruz celebrations in Diyarbakir. Co-Chairperson Aysel Tugluk said that people showed what they wanted, namely peace and democracy. People showed that they considered the Turkish Parliament and the government as responsible authorities to solve the Kurdish issue through democratic means, according to Tugluk. Co-Chairperson Ahmet Tugluk said that the people made a call to the government and to all people in the world that they wanted peace right now. Ahmet Turk denied allegations that Leyla Zana severed her ties with DTP.

OZGUR GUNDEM: A one-hour scuffle took place between a group of people and police in Barbaros quarter of Seyhan district in Adana. According to the daily, people hurled stones at police when police used tear gas to disperse people who were shouting pro-Ocalan slogans and waving PKK flags. Unspecified number of people have been wounded and detained. Meanwhile, an 80-person group attempted to hold an unauthorized Newruz celebration in a quarter of Erzincan, and Jandarma intervened. 26 people have been detained for violating the bill on holding demonstrations and gatherings.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Ten thousand people have reportedly participated in the demonstrations held in the outskirts of the Qandil Mountain in Iraq. Guerrillas and local people have gathered together and danced local dances.

RADIKAL: Minister of Interior had announced before the Newruz celebrations that waving or carrying flags other than the Turkish flag during the celebrations would be regarded as an offence, according to the daily. National Security Directorate announced that March 19 through 21, eighty-nine people have been detained on grounds that they carried pro-PKK and pro-Ocalan banners and they shouted pro-PKK slogans during Newruz celebrations. Eight of them have been arrested. These figures may reportedly increase because police will reportedly scan all footages taken during the celebrations to identify people participating in wrongdoing. Police have already started monitoring the records of the Diyarbakir Newruz celebrations. According to the Security Directorate, a total of 414,000 people participated in the 89 celebrations held in 45 provinces and 36 districts. According to these figures, there was a 25 percent decrease in the number of participants as compared to the previous years.

ZAMAN: Narcotics Branch of the Diyarbakir Security Directorate launched a crackdown on the drug traffickers and seized 40 kilograms of hashish in Diyarbakir. Six people have been detained in connection with the crackdown.

ZAMAN: A 5th-grader primary school student (11) in Mersin's Tarsus district attempted to commit suicide by hanging himself allegedly because his teacher beat him. The child's brain death reportedly took place.

ZAMAN / RADIKAL: Sabri Uzun, National Security Directorate's Intelligence Center Chief, has been removed from office upon instructions from the Interior Minister. Uzun had already implied in the statements he gave to parliamentary commission probing Semdinli case that Jandarma was responsible for the

bombings that took place in the last quarter of 2005 in Hakkari.

RADIKAL: The daily reported that parliamentary commission probing the Semdinli case would go on a five-day trip to Semdinli on March 27. On the first day of the trip, the commission members will talk with non-commissioned officers who are held as the defendants of the case and who are under arrest in Van. On the same day, some commission members will go to Bitlis and meet with the third defendant, Veysel Ates, who is a PKK defector. Commission members will go to Hakkari, Yuksekova, and Semdinli on Tuesday (03/28), Wednesday and Thursday respectively. Commission members will hear statements of Seferi Yilmaz, the bombed bookstore owner, in Hakkari. It is not yet certain whether the commission will hear statements of Prosecutor Ferhat Sarikaya or not.

ZAMAN: Ibrahim Ozdogan, a deputy from Motherland Party and member of the parliamentary commission probing Semdinli case, when asked why he would not go with other commission members to Semdinli, said that it was not the case that he was worried to go to a place where security is a concern; rather he would not go because he wanted to protest the government by his refusal to go. Ozdogan claimed that security issues would never be solved in the southeastern region if Interior Minister Abdulkadir Aksu remained in his position.

ZAMAN / OZGUR GUNDEM: Zaman daily reported that Leyla Zana, former DEP (Democracy Party), and DTP party organization have severed ties with each other. Zana reportedly was made to choose between political life and her family after her husband returned from Europe. Mehdi Zana, Leyla Zana's husband, was reportedly already ousted by the PKK and DTP circles because of his past statements against the PKK. Ozgur Gundem reported statements of DTP co-chairpersons as dismissing such allegations. DTP Co-chairperson Aysel Tugluk added that Zana participated in the Newruz celebrations and they were continuing dialogue and exchanging ideas with Zana.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Gun TV and radio station will start broadcasting in Kurdish language as of today with a 45-minute program called Dergusa Cande (The Cradle of Culture). A columnist reported that this was a right won as a result of a judicial struggle that lasted two years.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Residence permits of 700 Yezidis have been annulled in Germany reportedly as a result of a report generated by a delegation which recently toured Yezidi towns in southeastern Turkey such as Batman's Besiri, Sanliurfa's Viransehir, and Mardin's Midyat districts. The delegation reported that Yezidis were not being oppressed because of their faiths in Turkey.

OZGUR GUNDEM: A mathematics teacher has reportedly been detained in Tunceli as he was tutoring his class on grounds that he participated in an event held to mark March 8 Women's Day which allegedly aimed to make terrorism propaganda.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Attorneys of Abdullah Ocalan were reportedly prevented from meeting their client on grounds that the vessel that would carry them to the prison island was broken. The daily reports that it has been four weeks since Ocalan's attorneys have not been able to meet with Ocalan.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Eight person Italian delegation members, who took part in Newruz celebrations in Mardin's Nusaybin and Kiziltepe districts, reportedly said that human rights violations were disturbing them. Delegation members added that it was unacceptable to proclaim a person (Abdullah Ocalan) as a terrorist especially when such a lot of people was regarding him as their leader.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Second Army Commander General Sukru Sariisik, Van Jandarma Army Corps Commander General Selahattin Ugurlu and Sirnak 23rd Jandarma Border Division's Major General Ahmet Yavuz paid a visit to the Sirnak Governor Selahattin Apari.

RADIKAL / HURRIYET: KIK (Public Tenders Authority) started an investigation against AKP officials upon allegations that companies owned by AKP members in Hatay had been awarded 266 contracts out of 271 public tenders.
REID